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AUTHOR Peterson, Keith; Clower, Ramona
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ABSTRACT

As the world moves into the millennium, students will need certain skills to be successful in a global environment. This paper argues that competitive international exposure through debate can provide these skills. The paper consists of three sections. The first section briefly reviews current literature identifying the academic and intercultural benefits provided by a well rounded debate education. The second section provides narrative documentation of the international travel done by the Arkansas State University Speech and Debate Team along with the benefits gained as a result of its travel. The third section presents a list of international events available to anyone wishing to take advantage of the gains provided by international debate exposure. Contending that the time has come for people to begin eliminating borders through effective education, the paper focuses on competitive debate as a "wonderful place to start." (Contains 11 references.) (NKA)

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Eliminating Borders Through Debate Education

by Keith Peterson
Arkansas State University

&

Ramona Clower
Arkansas State University

Presented
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Introduction

"I have been impressed that our international debate experiences have given our students new insights into the cultures, issues and thought processes of people of other nationalities. These encounters have been positive additions to our domestic academic competitions, and have added a dimension not replicated at home. I am hopeful that these contacts abroad may teach our students to value differences, to accept that there are other valid points of view, and that, by the discussions spawned by honest debate, we just may avoid the horror of conflicts we have recently seen."

- *Dr. Leslie Wyatt*
  Chancellor, Arkansas State University

When first approached about constructing the following composition I was very excited. Not often does a forensics professional gain the opportunity to provide the academic community with a formal chronicling of the events that have brought their program so much success. But amidst my feelings of pride and delight I began to realize that this work could be so much more than just a series of personal narratives. Such an undertaking could be an initial step toward illustrating the critical importance of a well-rounded high exposure debate education.

As we move forward into the millennium students of the human race will need certain skills to be successful in a global environment. It is my belief that competitive international exposure through debate can provide this. To support this claim I have broken this paper down into three sections. The first section will briefly review current literature identifying the academic and intercultural benefits provided by a well-rounded debate education. Section two will provide narrative documentation of the international travel done by the Arkansas State University Speech and Debate team along with the benefits gained as a result of its travel. Finally, I will provide a list of international

events available to anyone wishing to take advantage of the gains provided by international debate exposure.

Our modern society has made it increasingly necessary to ensure multi-cultural throughout our businesses and our daily lives. Now has come the time for us to begin eliminating borders through effective education and competitive debate is a wonderful place to start.

Review of Literature

Many in the academic community have consistently misrepresented debate education. Not true are the implications that through debate the only skills young people learn are talking quickly and bloodthirstiness for winning. Rather, competitive debate provides students with the skills necessary to compete in the new global community. The following review will illustrate the effectiveness of a debate education by identifying the utility of debate education, applying these concepts to the real world, and using them to adapt multi-culturally.

Without a doubt debate education can play a very useful role in the life of any educated person. The history of academic debate forums dates as far back as the Greek the philosophers and is considered by some to be crucial to the creation of the modern day liberal arts (Bartanen 1999 &Frank 1997). At a basal level debate is an effort to teach informed advocacy (Frank 1997). But debate education does much more than just provide the world with a group of informed advocates. According to Perlich 1999, any forensic performer is taught to better their education through the uses of critical inquiry, emancipation, and societal change. When obtained these goals can afford students a great deal of success in life. Additionally the learned tools of rhetoric can help students

and professors bridge existing academic divides (Bartanen 1999). Specialized forms of debate such as Parliamentary debate allow for additional means of personal growth by allowing students to develop personalized oratorical styles through the use of logical constructs and audience observation (Williams 1996).

Possibly the most intriguing aspect of an education in competitive debate is the application of skills gained to the real world. Studies have shown that students who have participated in college forensics are more likely to be successful professionally (Stenger 1999). A possible reason for this is that students involved in competitive forensics have been conditioned to understand that understanding ones audience is imperative to personal success (Bartanen 1999 & Stenger 1999). But despite the reasoning education through oral communication and specifically argumentation has been identified as an essential element to many professions, including Public Relations, Broadcasting, and Journalism (Milsap 1998). Debate education also has real world application outside of the professional world. As critical members of society those with backgrounds in debate and rhetoric are seen to broad participators with personal emphases on civility, diversity, and the consideration of alternative views (Bartanen 1999).

Debate education reaches its apex of utility at a multi-cultural level. Debate educates students on a myriad of relevant social issues including human rights, economics, the environment and a host of other concerns that are the responsibility of all people (Goshner 1998). Further, debate teaches students to put "people" at the forefront of the arguments they make concerning relevant issues (Bartanen 1999). To this end debate establishes a need for students to understand the importance of the global community (Goshner 1998). Preston 1997, tells us that a multi-cultural society equals societal

confusion at many levels, and debate education creates an inclusion that lends itself to remedying this situation. Multi-cultural confusion will certainly be a stumbling block for those not prepared to deal with it. Debate and forensics is crucial in helping people adapt to the communication needs of tomorrows intercultural society (Preston 1997). Through the use of competitive debate specifically as it relates to rhetoric, students of the human race will have the tools necessary to gain an international moral consciousness (Frank 1997).

Narrative History

In order for debate education to have any effect internationally one first must experience international debate exposure. According to Ruane 2001, the British were the first to venture onto the "international debate scene". In 1922, the first debate tour of the United States was initiated by a group of Oxford debaters. Since this time debate tours have become popular devices employed by universities in the United States and the United Kingdom. As a result U.S. and U.K. debaters have learned a great deal about differing cultures by utilizing the cultural strengths and identifying the cultural weakness observed during their debate exchanges (Ruane 2001).

Given this historical information it only seems fitting that my narrative recounting will begin in the United Kingdom, the country in which international debate touring finds its origin.

The United Kingdom 1998-

In fall of 1997 the wheels were put into motion for the creation of United Kingdom Debate Tour. This tour originated with Dr. Jack Rogers who at the time was the Director

of Forensics at the University of Texas Tyler. Once it was determined that Dr. Rogers could successfully put together this tour the Arkansas State University Speech and Debate Team was immediately asked to join the tour. With much excitement and resolve, ASU quickly accepted this invitation.

For both schools (as well as the Louisiana State University-Shreveport who was also on the tour) this was a seminal venture into the world of competitive international debate, and the benefits that would follow exceeded expectation. The tour consisted of a 12-day comprehensive itinerary that found the ASU and fellow U.S. debaters competing against the most traditionally strong debate universities in the United Kingdom. As a result of detailed advanced planning the U.S. contingency was allowed to experience debate competitions as Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrews, and Glasgow.

Due to the comprehensive nature of the tour the United States students experienced a number of positive returns. First and foremost for students and coaches alike this was an opportunity to experience a people and culture that they were previously unfamiliar with. This kind of exposure is invaluable in a multi-cultural society. Secondarily, the U.S. debaters were given the opportunity to take what they had previously learned about argumentation and debate and combine that with the effective means or argumentation employed by the British debate students. In the end those present on this tour came home with a great deal of experience and exposure that many of their domestic peers did not have, giving them a competitive advantage State side.

In addition to the academic and competitive benefits gained from this venture the Arkansas State squad gained an even bigger advantage from this tour. During their visit to St. Andrews Scotland the ASU team met and befriended the English Speaking Union's

very own Marc Whitmore. Excited about the idea of education through international exchange, Marc decided to continue his education in the United States by seeking his Masters Degree at Arkansas State. During his stay Marc was not only a model student but also provided the ASU Speech and Debate Team with a fresh new coaching perspective. In addition to the new perspectives on education Marc provided ASU (as well as number of enduring international contacts), he also brought new opportunities to the students at ASU. With Marc's influence and tutorial, Arkansas State undergraduate Shane Puckett secured an overseas internship with the English Speaking Union. As a result Shane was allowed to spend a semester working in London for the ESU, an experience that he will carry with him throughout his career.

The United Kingdom 1999-

Given the success of the previous year's tour the principles involved in the 1998 British Debate tour decided to continue you the experience through to the following year. The 1999 tour found the University of Arkansas Monticello joining UTT and ASU in their travels across the Atlantic Ocean.

The 1999 tour was a 14-day trip that included stops at all the universities visited in 1998 and added stops in Aberdeen and Inverness.

This tour also contracted a number of positive gains for the universities involved. Similar in nature to the 1998 tour, those involved gained an invaluable amount of experience competing on the international scene. Students were given the opportunity to develop continuing relationships with peers in both England and Scotland, and were able

to experience the importance of other cultures through debate as well as the friendships they developed.

Though there was no Marc Whitmore's returning with the U.S. crew as a result of this trip there were nonetheless important contacts made. Dr. Jack Rogers has since returned to the United Kingdom in the year 2000 and extended the "international experience" to a new group of U.S. debaters not present for the first two tours. Additionally, the Arkansas State University squad has developed contacts in the United Kingdom that have culminated in their expected return to Britain in December 2001.

Budapest 2000-

Excited about the success of the British Debate tours, Michael Fisher, Keith Peterson, and Craig LaPointe, of Arkansas State University sought membership in the International Debate Education Association in the year 2000. Motivated by membership in such a prestigious international debate community the three ASU scholars constructed a research paper entitled; *Using the Concept of Ground to Stimulate Learner Empowerment in the Classroom.* The ASU group was honored to have their work accepted for presentation at the 2000 IDEA conference in Budapest Hungary.

The experience of the Budapest conference brought more to the Arkansas State Speech and Debate team than anyone could have possibly imagined. Throughout the course of the conference the ASU scholars were allowed to confer and socialize with debate educators from around the world. Every region of the globe was represented in Budapest and educators made academic presentations from all cultural walks of life. Not only did the Americans present get to discuss and analyze alternate debate theory

proposed to them by their international colleagues, but they were also exposed to the problems and progress experienced by debate professionals world wide.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned my expectations of this piece of research go far beyond a chronicling of past events. Though the literature and experiences sighted in this work would seem to suggest a number of benefits that can be gained from international debate competition, this work would be incomplete without a "plan of action". For this reason I would like to conclude by providing the interested reader with a list of possible "international ventures" that are available to those with the interest and resources to pursue them.

International Debate Schedule-

(Taken from the British Debate: Tournament Calendar 2001-02)

October-

19 October, Marquess of Bute (St. Andrews), Contact: Miranda Weigler

26 October, Lincoln's Inn IV, Contact: Jern-Fei Ng

November-

2-3 November, University College Dublin, Contact: Laura McGowan (Convenor)

2-3 November, Durham Union Society IV, Contact: Alanah Gleeson

3 November, UCL President's Cup, Contact: Ross Ford

9-10 November, Oxford Union Society IV, Contact: Richard Osborne

16-17 November, Cambridge Union Society IV, Contact: Vikram Nair

23-24 November, Leeds University IV, Contact: Tessa Woolfson

30 Nov- 1 Dec, England & Whales Mace, Contact: Debbie Newman

December-

7-8 December, UCC Philosoph IV, Contact: Fiona de Londras

27 Dec-3 Jan, Worlds Debate Championships, Contact: Michael Meeuwis (Convenor)

January-

18-19 January, Edinburgh IV, Contact: Jess Bicknell

25-26 January, Trinity College Dublin, Contact: Greg O Ceallaigh (Convenor)

February-

1-2 February, Bristol University, Contact: Sam Negus

15 February, Glasgow Ancients, Contact: Peter English

22 February, Inner Temple IV, Contact: Elliot Gold

March-

1-2 March, University of Limerick IV, Contact: Cait Ni Choclain

22-25 March, European Championships (Haifa, Israel), Contact: Uri Zakai

(Taken from IDEA Conference 2001)

October-

12-14 October, Debate and Argumentation: Opening Minds, Borders, and Societies.

Prague, Czech Republic. Email contact: sbatrak@sorosny.org

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